

OUT OF THE DARKNESS

(Continued from Last Week)

With a thin piece of wire and a bit of steel, Bartley picked the lock, then flung the door open and turned his flashlight into the darkness within. I think that Currie and myself both held our breath as the light swept back and forth over the walls and floor. It disclosed nothing more startling than a number of boxes, similar to those we had seen on the truck, piled one on the other against the walls. It was plain enough where the load had been set.

Bartley led the way in and closed the door behind us. Once more he swept the vault with his torch, and this time we noticed a lantern on a box and lit it.

The vault was about twenty-five feet long and had been dug into the side of the hill, but the sides and roof were of stone. Along the walls were niches for coffins, and these were piled high, and the floor as well, with hundreds of small boxes. The flame of the lantern flickered in a draft and queer shadows danced on the walls, while a musty, earthy smell rose half chokingly. It was not the most pleasant place to be in.

But Bartley did not seem to mind it. He stood in the center of the floor, glancing around the vault with such an amused smile that I knew that something had pleased him particularly. Suddenly he went to the nearest box, ripped off the cover, and drew out a bottle. We crowded around him as he removed the paper and disclosed the label of a well-known brand of imported whisky.

"That's what I expected," Bartley commented. "We know now what was



"That's What I Expected," Bartley Commented.

on that truck. Captain Lowe won't have to hunt any longer for the place where they hide smuggled whisky."

He made a careful search of the vault. The boxes lined the walls to a height of six feet on all sides. A few cigarette stubs on the dirt floor showed that some one had been smoking, but there was nothing to indicate whom he might have been. As he finished his examination, Bartley said, "I guess we may as well go now."

I had taken off my hat when I entered the vault, and placed it on one

of the boxes, and now when I looked for it I could not find it. It occurred to me that it must have fallen behind a box; and, taking Bartley's torch, I climbed upon the box and flashed the light into the niche behind the one on which I thought I had laid it. There it lay. As I reached for it my hand came in contact with something hard. I knelt, even as my fingers groped for the object, that it was a revolver. Climbing down from the box, I went up to Bartley.

"Look what I found!" I exclaimed. "Where did you get that?" he asked excitedly as he took it from me.

I told him of my hat falling behind the boxes, and how the revolver had been in the niche back of them. There seemed no reason for his being so excited over the find, but his next words enlightened me.

"That's the gun that was in Slyke's hand this morning. I recognize the worn place on the barrel."

"But how did it get there?" I asked in wonder.

"I don't know," was the reply. "It looks as if the person that threw it back of the boxes, did it to hide it. He may intend to come for it later."

To my surprise, he bent over suddenly and blew out the lantern. In a second the vault was in darkness. Currie started to remonstrate, but a warning whisper from Bartley stopped him.

"Both of you get back of that door at once. There is someone outside. Don't make a move or a sound. I think he is going to come in."

I heard Currie mutter in surprise as we groped our way behind the door. At first I could hear nothing; then on the other side of the wooden door I heard some one stumble and a hand fumble for the lock. What could it mean? If the truck had come back for another load we were in a bad fix indeed. The men who had fired at us before would not hesitate to shoot to kill this time, and when we were missing no one would think to search for us in this vault. In a fight, the odds were heavily against

us, as Bartley alone was armed. Currie and myself had been placed by Bartley so that when the door opened we would be hidden by it. He took up his position on the other side, crouching flat against the wall. It was too dark to make out his figure, or even that of Currie at my side. I listened to his uneasy breathing, and for a second wondered what he was thinking about.

Whoever was opening the door had no fear of making a noise. He stumbled into the vault and swung the door behind him with a little click. Then a slit of light pierced the darkness and we crouched against the wall, scarcely daring to breathe, expecting every moment that he would see us. Just what he had come for I never knew. He played the light rather aimlessly along the walls, then turned in onto the floor. All at once I paused, and I heard an astonished gasp. No wonder, for the light was resting on Bartley's shoes.

The next second he had extinguished it and was making for the door. Almost before he had moved, Bartley had flashed on his own torch, and was saying, "Put up your hands. I have you covered."

The light in Bartley's hand had been focused on the man's body, leaving his face in darkness. As he began to move it upward to his face, the man made a swift, flying dive at Bartley's legs. The attack was so sudden that he was taken unawares, and they fell to the floor together. As Bartley went down, he struck the button of his torch and extinguished it, leaving us in darkness. We could hear the two men thrashing about on the floor, but could not tell who was getting the best of it. Then I remembered the lantern and searched for that. Relighting it, I held it above my head so that the light fell on the floor. Bartley was sitting on the man that had attacked him, his face and white suit streaked with dirt and a lump reddening over one eye, but he was smiling. He directed me to find his torch, which had rolled half under a box, and relight it. When I had complied, he rose to his feet, and, pulling the man up with him, told me to throw the light on the face of his prisoner.

"Let's have a look at this chap."

We saw a black, scowling face, and cruel, shifty eyes that blinked angrily. Currie cried, "Why, it's Slyke's chauffeur!"

The man did not deny it, but stood silent and glowering. Remembering what Bartley had told me of the butler having seen him on the stairs while we were in the tower rooms, I wondered if he were the one who had placed the revolver here. When Bartley questioned him as to why he had come to the vault he replied that it was none of his business; and when Bartley suggested that the police might make it their business, he only laughed sneeringly. We were discussing what we should do with him, since there was no charge on which he could be arrested, when we received another shock.

The chauffeur had closed the door of the vault when he entered, but in some way it had become unfastened during the struggle; and now stood wide open, the lighted interior plainly visible to anyone without. We were standing grouped together near the center of the room, our backs to the door, when a voice said, "Up with your hands, the whole four of you. Be quick about it! I have you all covered, and will shoot the first one that moves."

There was but one thing to do, and we all did it. With our hands high in the air, we turned to the doorway to see who the intruder was. He was a tall, heavy-set man, with a round face, holding a revolver in his right hand.

Who could this second man be? For a second I thought it must be some friend of the chauffeur; but one look at his astonished face told me he knew no more who the man was than we did. Bartley looked puzzled, yet a little smile never left his face.

The man stood still for a moment before advancing into the vault. It seemed to me that he was startled at finding four of us there. He came to the center of the vault, and stopped, keeping several feet away from us.

"Starting with the man on the right," he said, "come over here, one by one. I am going to search you. No foolishness, now; I will kill the first man that starts something."

"My, what a pleasant man," I heard Currie mutter.

The first man on the right happened to be Bartley. He stepped forward, his hands high in the air. I wondered if he would submit quietly to being searched. He allowed the left hand of the man to go over his clothing until it reached the revolver in his pocket; then like a flash he grasped the hand holding the gun at his chest, and gave it such a quick jerk that the weapon fell to the floor.

The fight was on. Both Currie and myself started to assist him, but Bartley called to us to watch the chauffeur. I picked up the revolver and covered the man.

It was not a long fight, and Bartley soon had his antagonist subdued. As he dragged him to his feet, and began to search him, he stopped with an amused cry. On the man's vest was a little badge.

"Why didn't you tell us you were a detective?" he asked.

The man, his face red with rage, answered, "Why in h— I should I?" Bartley explained who he was, and the detective was delighted at the encounter. After we had given him back his gun and helped him brush himself off, he seated himself on a box and said, "I will say you work

quick, Mr. Bartley."

We grinned at this. We were much relieved to find that he was a detective, and not one of the gang engaged in running whisky. He told us that he was in the revenue department and had been watching Slyke's house for some time, or I should have said, rather, his chauffeur's. He had given him the slip and he had been searching for him already. He had encountered him about ten o'clock and had been trailing him ever since. When the chauffeur had come to the vault, he had waited for him outside; then the door had swung open and he had seen a chance to capture what he thought was the gang.

He pointed at the chauffeur and said, "That's the chap, I believe, that killed Slyke."

Up to this time the chauffeur had not said a word. His face turned



His Face Turned White With Rage, and He Cried, "You Lie!"

white with rage, and he cried, "You lie!" and would have taken the detective by the throat if Bartley had not prevented him.

Bartley and the detective, whose name was Black, decided that the best thing to do with the chauffeur was to place him in the hands of the police. When Black learned that the vault was filled with whisky, he asked Bartley to remain and help him guard it until the police could relieve him; he seemed to fear that the rest of the gang would return. Bartley told me to go to the house and call up Roche, and ask him to come at once with his men, and then to bring back his car.

I reached the main road without meeting anyone, and, breaking into a run, was soon at the house. I telephoned at once to Roche; and he was so much startled at my story that I had great difficulty in making him understand where he was to go, and what he was to do. At last he agreed to come at once.

It took me only a few moments in Bartley's car to reach the woods again; but, when I arrived, I saw two other cars already parked on the roadside, and knew that the police had preceded me.

I found Roche and two of his men in the vault, conferring with Bartley and Black. It had been decided to guard the place until morning, when the whisky could be removed. The chauffeur was to be taken to the Saratoga jail and locked up.

When we reached the house, Mrs. Currie came to meet us. At the sight of her husband's black eye, which by this time was very noticeable, and the ruin of Bartley's white suit, she gave a little cry.

"What under heaven have you been doing?" she asked.

Currie gave me a wink. "Looking for whisky," he answered.

He went to a nearby table, took something from each pocket and placed them carefully upon it. He then stood looking down at them proudly.

"A little souvenir of the night's work," he remarked, pointing to two bottles of whisky which he had taken, without our knowing it, from the box that Bartley had opened in the vault.

CHAPTER VII

In Which Bartley Talks of Many Things.

Mrs. Currie wanted to hear the story of our adventures; and when Bartley recounted what had taken place, I noticed that he expressed no opinion as to what was back of it all.

It was after one when we reached our rooms, and I expected that Bartley would want to go to bed at once. I knew how tired I was, and supposed that he must be even more weary. But, after he had gotten into his pajamas, he dropped into a chair by the window, curled one leg over the arm, lighted his pipe, and turned to me.

"Well, what do you think of it all?" he drawled.

That was a hard question to answer. We had been through so much, so many apparently unconnected events, that I scarcely knew what to think. Then, too, I knew very little of what had taken place after I had left him at Slyke's, or what new things he had observed there. The finding of whisky and the sudden appearance of the chauffeur, coupled with my discovery of the revolver, seemed to me to still further complicate the problem. What had he come to the vault for? I remembered that the detective had said he thought the chauffeur had killed Slyke. I wondered if this was simply a wild guess, or whether there was something he had

Bartley watched me with that little smile on his lips that meant so many things. "Well, Pelt," he said, "it looks as if we were engaged upon as mysterious a case as ever came our way. The more I look it over, the less sure I am of anything. Do you know, I picked up very little after you left the house?"

I had been wondering all day if he would find any clues of value. I knew what a careful search he must have made, and his statement that he picked up very little of importance surprised me.

Bartley watched me for a moment or two before continuing. Then he told me of his day's work. They had been unable to find the chauffeur either at the garage or anywhere else around the estate. No one had seen him since the butler saw him on the stairs early in the morning. The cook had later volunteered the information that Mr. Slyke and he had quarreled over something. What it was she did not know; she had only heard the few words he had repeated to me. The house had been searched from top to bottom, but without result. So far as he could tell, nothing had been stolen.

Bartley had learned also that there was a feeling between Miss Potter and the chauffeur, and he had questioned her about it. She refused to say what it was, and seemed to consider Bartley's presence as an intrusion. He had secured nothing new from her. When asked if she knew whether Slyke had any enemies who might want to take his life, she replied she did not. Repeated questioning could not shake her story that the step-daughter Ruth had not been expected home that night, and that she had not known the girl was in the house until we had all heard her voice on the stairs. As the girl carried her own key, she could easily, she said, have returned without her knowing it.

Then there was the dog to be considered. He had slept as usual in the big living room on the night of the crime. The girl's story of his walking to the foot of the stairs with her when she came in, proved that he was there the entire night. Bartley remarked that it was very strange that the dog should have made no sound.

"It looks," I commented, "as if whoever committed the crime did not pass through the living room."

Bartley gave me a disgusted look. "Or else, Pelt, the dog knew him. The only way to reach the room where Slyke slept was up those stairs, and to reach the stairs he had to pass through the living room. Remember this, too, Lawrence said that Slyke was not going to bed, but expected another visitor. The butler says the dog was in the room with him when he let Lawrence out. Suppose the other visitor came. If Slyke himself admitted him, the dog would have probably barked at least once—that is, unless he knew him."

"Then it might have been someone in the house," I suggested.

Bartley assented, and we discussed the various persons in the household. First, we both agreed that the shot the boy had heard was the one that had killed Slyke, and that the time must have been between half-past one and two o'clock. If that were so, then, when the girl came in about three o'clock, Slyke was already dead. Bartley was sure that it took at least thirty minutes to undress Slyke and get him down from the balcony to his room. If the shot that the boy heard was fired before two o'clock, then the girl would not be suspected, for she had not returned until three. We eliminated her.

(To Be Continued)

E. X. Andem entertained fourteen members of the Baraca class and six invited guests at a little banquet Friday, June 8, when plans were suggested for enlarging the class. All enjoyed a pleasant evening.

A pleasant week-end was enjoyed at Laguna Beach by Mr. and Mrs. J. Brodie of Cota avenue and Mr. and Mrs. John Mason of Park Terrace.

McKINLEY INN
Mrs. Zenobia Wallace of Los Angeles was a Sunday dinner guest at the Inn.

Edward Collins and a party of friends enjoyed the U. T. picnic at Redondo Beach last Saturday.

Mr. Knight, of Argentine, with the Santa Fe Oil Company, is a guest at the McKinley Inn. Mr. and Mrs. Edward La Mott and son Edward were guests Sunday of friends in Los Angeles.

Charles Landes, of York, Pa., is making his home at the Inn. The Hon. Russell Horne, general superintendent of the Santa Fe Oil Company, was a recent guest at the McKinley.

THE IRONTON
New arrivals who have registered at the Ironton are Messrs. Jas. A. Logan and S. H. Moore, Lady, Oklahoma; Mrs. Cora Martin, Monrovia; J. A. Miller, Hermosa; Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Kramer, and William Gibson, of Los Angeles.

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Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Woodward of Wilmington were Sunday guests of the former's parents, Mr. and Mrs. G. A. Woodward, of Arlington avenue.

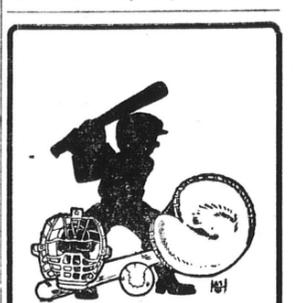
A recent guest of Mr. and Mrs. John G. Gay of Arlington avenue was Mrs. A. G. Underwood of Boyle Heights.

Mr. and Mrs. R. S. Alges of Long Beach were Sunday dinner guests of Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Campbell, of Park Terrace.

Rev. F. E. Dark, of Seattle, Washington, will be a guest this week-end at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Bale.

Lee McIntyre arrived last week-end from San Francisco, and is at the home of his brother, J. C. McIntyre, of Gramercy avenue. The visitor's home is in Nebraska and he is in California, enroute to Honolulu.

Mrs. Gilbert Goulic of Gramercy avenue was a week-end guest of her daughter, Mrs. L. M. Nelson in Los Angeles. They enjoyed an auto trip to Santa Susana Pass and returned by way of Tejuca.



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